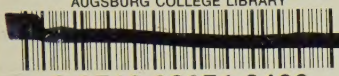
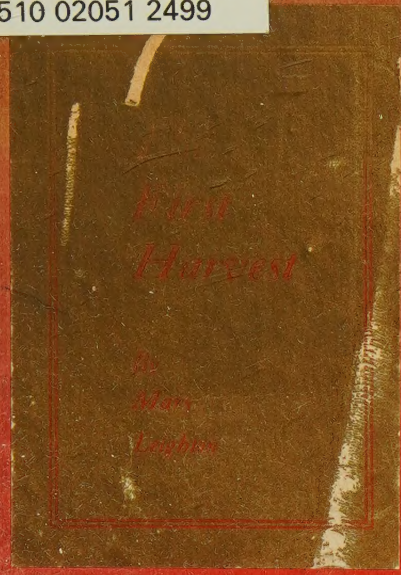


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THE FIRST HARVEST



THE MESSIANIC ERA

"The race, purified and perfected of soul, enters into a new paradise"

From the painting by John S. Sargent

THE FIRST HARVEST

BY
MARY LEIGHTON

Two Illustrations by
JOHN S. SARGENT



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THE FIRST HARVEST





EVE

From the painting by John S. Sargent

THE FIRST HARVEST



The day dawned bright on Eden fair,
Its verdure fanned by fragrant air,
The voice of birds joined note and trill
With murmur of melodious rill

That swirled and eddied in its play,
Or dashed from rocks with rainbow spray.
All nature laughed beneath the sun
For life and joy had just begun.

A glowing pebble caught the gaze
Of Eve's quick eye, in swift amaze
She called aloud, "Dear Adam, see,
A gift the brook has brought to me!"

But puzzled Adam answered not,
For heart to mind a doubt had brought;
In open palm a creature lay
With wings resplendent as the day,



THE FIRST HARVEST

Its beauty rent by slender thorn
And vibrant pain; would such adorn,
As he had thought, Eve's golden hair,
With thorn, as pin, to fix it there ?

Enchanted by its wondrous grace
A laughing Eve had given chase;
When caught, he made it quiet lie,
This beauteous, velvet butterfly.

And he had thought in golden nest
Of Eve's bright hair it should find rest;
But quivering wings bespoke its hurt
And crumpled body lay inert.

Thus misery whispered unto man
Of *living* grace in nature's plan.
Eve now drew near with shining eyes,
And voice that thrilled with glad surprise :

"See ! Adam dear, the sunset's glow,
That evening waters softly show,
Has fallen in the crystal stream
And this bright stone has caught its gleam."



THE FIRST HARVEST

She laughed and placed it in her hair,
Against her bosom white and fair,
On slender wrist and finger white,
In joyous innocent delight.

And Adam's voice responded now,
A warm flush mounting to his brow:
"Thou loveliest of Eden's gifts
That questioning heart and thought uplifts;

"Thou standest rival to thy stone
With fairer beauty than its own !
But come and look upon this thing,
So gay, so graceful on the wing,

"Now prostrate, quivering and spoiled,
Whose living purpose I have foiled.
I'll take the thorn from out its wing—
I know in foot it hath a sting—

"See, softly on this flower-bed gay
We'll put the butterfly away !"
But Eve cried out, while quick tears fell :
"We've hurt it, Adam ; 'tis not well .



THE FIRST HARVEST

"O vain and cruel, so to still
A velvet creature to thy will !
Why did we stay the butterfly ?
'Tis useless, and will only die."

"Thy words and tears can help us not,"
Said Adam gravely. "I but sought
To please thee, as thou knowest well.
What *is* to die? How canst thou tell

"What will befall? A warning take
And hold no commune with the snake.
Thou weep'st—forgive—that falling tear
Doth make thee fair and doubly dear."

Eve trembled as she glanced around,
Her eyes, averted, sought the ground:
"Oh, be not angry! I will sing;
Forget that broken, quivering thing;

"And let me make a wreath for thee—
The while we rest beneath this tree—
And, lest thou nod in noonday nap,
Thy head shall pillow on my lap."



THE FIRST HARVEST

"Dear Eve! But see, upon thy stone
A tear, its twin in radiance grown !
That lightly rests within thy hand
As lake embosomed in the land.

"I beg of thee a golden strand
From thy fair tresses ; now thy hand.
I'll twist the threads on finger fair
And bind the stone in ring of hair.

" 'Tis scanty means to hold it fast—
This symbol that our love shall last—
I know a gum on broken tree,
Perhaps 'twill hold the stone for thee."

"No ! Adam, no ! go thou not hence.
The forest trees grow tall and dense ;
I truly fear to be alone,
A feeling thou hast never known."

"Thou'rt wrong ; I also know this fear.
I'll leave thee not, but, seated here,
Will tell thee what I chanced to see—
An awful judgment and decree .



THE FIRST HARVEST

"I sat alone, for thou didst sleep
In night's first hour of silence deep.
But restless I, scarce knowing yet
That purling sound of rivulet

"Doth wake, by its insistent note,
In fretful mind, a sense remote
Of half-guessed truths. A shadow fell
Across the path, whose strange, weird spell

"Clung like a mist. I saw wings beat
O'er a majestic form, while heat
From evil breath made nature faint
And seemed the very air to taint.

"But soon the beating wings were stilled ;
Insidious accents rose and thrilled ;
Compelling, evil, falsely sweet
That eye of guile, mine shrank to meet ;

"Yet more to mind than sense it reached,
While blood congealed and features
bleached.

Its words were these: 'Newcomer here,
I give thee welcome, and draw near.



THE FIRST HARVEST

"I, spirit, to whom knowledge flows
That none but an immortal knows.
Thou, sterile, vain, an empty shell
That scarce would blaze in fire of hell !"

"My mounting wrath all fear outsprang
In angry words, that clearly rang :
'In His own image made he man ;
On Tree of Knowledge placed a ban

"Till man and fruit be ripe. Begone,
Tempter and messenger of wrong !'
The creature bowed with mock disdain,
With scornful accents spoke again .

" 'Awake,' it said, 'to know thy power ;
Drain deep the cup of transient hour ;
Thyself creating living man
And loosing knowledge from its ban .

" 'Eat thou the fruit and know its pain,
Thou'lt eat again, till thou shalt gain
Full power and craft, the serpent's guile,
And fortitude to sin and smile .



THE FIRST HARVEST

“ ‘Thou’lt make of this, thy footstool earth,
A realm where mind of man had birth,
I’ll give thee wings on which to rise
Till thou dost rule within the skies,

“ ‘A mighty, godlike, questioning power
That, sleeping now, is still thy dower ;
While I—compelling Chancellor—
Shall know the joy of Lucifer.’

“ ‘The boastful voice was stilled by flash
Of light on sound—a rending crash
That tore the earth—when all was still
Fear seemed the very air to fill .

“ ‘The haughty head was rigid now,
And bloody sweat stood on its brow.
Then softly—softly—through the gloom,
Through numbing sense of pending doom,

“ ‘Came music of uplifting note
That seemed from vault of heaven to float,
While fluttering wings stirred in the sky,
As gentle breath in troubled sigh .



THE FIRST HARVEST

"From out the music's ebb and swell
A Voice in sorrowing cadence fell :
'Unhappy Spirit ! In thy guile
How bitter—evil—lost awhile !

" 'Yet thou shalt rise and, rising, know
Thy doom is mercy's overflow.
No more mayst thou share heavenly wings
Until repentance haply brings

" 'Such change of mind and change of heart,
That thou shalt wish to ease the smart
Of man's hot tears; thy motives clean
That bid him on thy judgment lean .

" 'Thy spirit, ruled by evil hour,
Shall learn love's tenderness and power;
But now thy breath has scorched thy wings
And left thee bare. All evil brings

" 'Recoil, the venom of thy gall
Contorts thy form and aids thy fall.
Farewell ! and learn that love will teach
The haven homing bird should reach.'



THE FIRST HARVEST

"I looked upon the fallen thing,
So strangely coiling ring on ring,
That tried to rise, though faintly now,
The stain of red drops on its brow.

"Then slumber came. When I awoke
I heard thy voice that softly spoke
To something resting in the grass,
Close coiled and hurt. I knew, alas !

"Thy gentle heart would seek to still
A feeble plaint, though boding ill,
While helpless I, though anger smote
On every sense and parched my throat.

"Thou heard'st my step and hither came ;
I caught thee fast, but did not blame ;
For thy sweet eyes were innocent,
Thy hand in mine lay confident."

"Ah, Adam dear ! why fear the snake
When I have thee? I do not take
His thought for evil, as thou dost."
"But, Eve, thou heard'st the Word, 'Thou
must



THE FIRST HARVEST

“ ‘Not eat forbidden fruit or thou
Wilt die.’ In this we only bow
To His high will who rules that time
Shall stay his wings in Eden’s clime

“Till we by learning, may at length
Meet knowledge with a surer strength.”
“Thou, Adam, heard’st the Word, to me
Less clear the meaning seems to be.”

“Thou griev’st me, Eve ; speak what is true !
If we should err, we’ll greatly rue.
How can it be thou dost not fear ?”
“Thou’rt cruel, Adam ! Yes—I fear—

But ’tis the cloud upon thy brow
So fair and happy until now.
Thy Eve, that ever would be glad,
Doth err in that she makes thee sad .

“Art weary, too, that horrid night
Has robbed thine eyes of their bright light.
Thou smil’st again! wilt now agree
To rest and let me sing to thee ?”



THE FIRST HARVEST

SONG

Come, sweet rest! I call on thee!
Smile on one I would have free—
Free of fear for his own Eve—
Still all thoughts that would deceive.

Make him free as beam of light
Chasing shadow of the night,
Till it slip in mossy dell
To the ferns that love it well.

Free as bird on happy wing
Mounting, as the lark, to sing
High in sky, a tiny cloud
Vibrant, with sweet song endowed.

Free as rill that never still
Leaps in frolic down the hill,
And in valley where it flows
Laughs and chatters as it goes.

Free as air that fans his cheek,
Softly playing hide-and-seek
O'er his brow, in chestnut locks,
Till merry puff a ringlet rocks.

Eve paused in song, and bent her head
To press soft lips in airy bed
Of Adam's curls, and whisper low:
"Thou'lt sleep awhile, and I must go



THE FIRST HARVEST

"To fetch more green, for hands lie still
That should weave vine and daffodil
In fragrant curtain for our bower,
That nestles where great branches tower

"A hundred hand-spans in the air.
He stirs! Again I must ensnare
His senses with a rhythmic song
That gentle slumber shall prolong."

SONG

Tear-drops fell from loving eyes
Falling as the dew that lies
Lightly caught on rose's leaf
Drinking color from beneath.

First so pale—a misty white—
Softly blushing with delight
When the sun, in happy glow,
Whispers things they love to know.

Bright they shone in floral cup,
Fragrant chalice lifted up
Lest eye grieve and loose again
Shower of foolish, needless rain.



THE FIRST HARVEST

The song was hushed, for Adam slept ;
Eve smiling rose, on tip-toe stepped
Till, nearing woodland path that led
To sunlit sylvan river-bed,

She sped like faun, and reached a dell
Where spraying waters lightly fell
O'er channeled rock, bedewing moss
Whose vivid greens the slopes emboss .

Then, caught in stony cup below,
The tinkling waters ceased to flow,
A moment resting in the shade
Before their gush through sunny glade.

Eve paused, as bird that poised on wing
Seeks sunlit bough on which to swing
In joyous cadence of a song,
Soft answering echo doth prolong .

The cool of dell cast gentle spell
O'er white-limbed Eve ; but soon the smell
Of earth's moist growths, in vine and leaf,
Brought memory of moments brief



THE FIRST HARVEST

In which to weave her curtain screen.
Her fingers flew among the green,
And gathered vines from shadowy gloom ;
Their startled eyes of tiny bloom

Outpeeping through a leafy mass
Of greenery that would surpass
The encircling reach of Eve's fair arm.
Her ardent zeal lent added charm

In warm flushed cheeks, and golden hair
That fell o'er brow and shoulders fair ;
From clinging locks she sought relief
By twining them with vine and leaf.

She tried to bear the mass of vines
To river path where bright sun shines,
But saw upreach from out its bed
A coiling form and flattened head .

She dropped the vines : a cry that rose
Upon her lips in terror froze ;
For near her feet the snake now coiled
Amidst the vines that she had toiled



THE FIRST HARVEST

To gather there. Its gleaming head
A moment swayed before it said:
"The vines are fair and green, yet smell
Will cling to them of sunless dell.

"I know a bright and fragrant flower
That would add scent to curtained bower;
'Twould weave in pattern gay and rare,
And lend new grace to golden hair.

"It hath a form thou hast not seen ;
Midst Eden's flowers it blooms as queen,
And holds soft, melting tints that glow
As bright as those thy pebble show."

Eve quivering stood, as gentle bird
By reptile eye of guile is stirred,
With breathing stilled and color waned,
But soon her mind its poise regained.

It seemed to her a harmless thing
This garden creature sought to bring,
The gift of Eden's regal flower
To grace her screen and scent her bower.



THE FIRST HARVEST

Within her cheeks the color crept;
Her quickened glance then lightly swept
O'er river path and broadening space
To rising ground of upland's base,

On which rock cliffs had just begun
To trace their shadows; for the sun
Majestic in its measured pace
Turns ever to the globe its face.

The cliff's faint shadow caught Eve's eye,
Though still the passing sun stood high.
"Where grows the flower of melting light
That should the eye of man delight?"

She quickly asked, "Is't far from here?"
The snake, uncoiling, hissed: "To fear
Is not to find. Leave here the vines.
Thou'lt see, ere yet the sun inclines

"A scanty hour in heavenly span,
A marvel still unseen by man."
It glided quickly on before
Nor halted till the quest was o'er.

* * * *



THE FIRST HARVEST

Eve noted, pausing on the way,
That fissures cut the cliff wall gray,
And when she passed within its shade
An archway led to palisade.

Within broad circling arms of stone
A hidden garden bloomed alone;
From rocks above, a bright cascade
Sent laughing water to the glade.

Here nature showed her happiest mood,
And song-birds cheered the solitude.
A veil-like cloud of rosy shade
The sun's bright face had overlaid

As if, with softened light, to screen
The loveliness of such a scene.
Amidst the garden's bloom a tree
Bore fragrant fruit—the mystic key

Of life's keen, passionate desire
To know, to seize ; e'en to aspire
To reach beyond enfolding night
And seek, in gleam of higher light,



THE FIRST HARVEST

The reasons why, the causes there
That make man hope and ever dare
A further step. Thus, ruthless, flows
The sap the Tree of Knowledge knows ;

Its subtle atoms, mingling here,
Produce a force dissolving fear,
And bear life on with vibrant glow—
The urge of its impelling flow.

Eve deeply breathed, the air was filled
With fragrance from the fruit distilled.
Its subtle scent her pulses thrilled,
And every fear in joy was stilled.

With upraised hand she plucked the fruit—
And felt a vibrant tingle shoot
Through clasping fingers, and recruit
Her courage to its deepest root—

Yet, pausing, asked with troubled sigh,
"The threat of ill—what *is* to die—?"
The snake replied from rocky shelf :
"To cast thy form, but not thyself.



THE FIRST HARVEST

"To die is but a form of speech ;
And thou, as yet, guess not the reach
Of life, that has a mighty range.
To live—to die—each is but change,

"Or mingled interchange. To-day,
Life is a stirring roundelay;
Tomorrow, freed and drawn away
By Will that life and death obey.

"But eat the fruit within thy hand
And taste the joy it doth command,
The while I pluck thee blossoms rare
That cling on branch and feed on air."

Eve pressed the apple to her lips,
And felt as humming-bird that sips
From heart of flower, or gull that dips
His silver wings in cool green tips

Of waves that curl on ocean's brow.
The Tree of Knowledge doth endow
Quick instincts, and a sense of life
That cuts like sharpened blade of knife.



THE FIRST HARVEST



About Eve's head the blossoms fell—
An orchid group, with subtle smell—
Among them many a lovely form,
Resplendent, and as opal warm

With blending tints of every ray
That spring to life from kiss of day.
Eve, startled, knelt among the flowers,
A dove amidst potential powers.

Among the shower of blooms was one
Whose noisome odor had begun
To cloud her joy, its petals flung
A stifling breath that seized and clung.

She tried to fling the bloom away,
But close infolded in it lay
A tiny writhing form, whose fang
Wounded her hand as it outsprang.

Eve started up with frightened cry :
"I faint with pain. Is this to die ?
To sin and die while Adam sleeps ;
Forgive ! forgive ! my spirit weeps."



THE FIRST HARVEST

Of falling blossoms one still hung
Like radiant gem her hair among ;
From its bright heart a creature flew,
As fair and pure as morning dew.

It lighted on her wounded hand,
Whose cruel hurt its soft wings fanned ;
And with antennæ, strangely bright,
It touched the wound with points of light.

Eve watched the little creature lay
Its balm on wound, then fly away.
"Thou bright of wing !" she cried, "the pain
Is stilled and joy has come again .

"Such throbbing pulse I never knew ;
Can word of serpent then be true ?
I'll haste to Adam, for in this
New life and joy I find a bliss

"That he should share. I'll take the fruit—
If only he be resolute
And eat!—the apple then will cheer
His heart with joy that knows no fear."



THE FIRST HARVEST

Eve filled her hands with fruit, but stayed
Her flight; the snake before her swayed
A mocking head, and touched, with hiss,
An apple's cheek where warm bright kiss

Of sun had made it richly glow.
"Nay, haste not, surely thou wouldst know
The meaning of these flowers, of blow
Upon thy hand, that pained thee so ?

"The orchids on the Tree that grow
Are parasites that life must know.
The noisome odor is as flow
Of malice from the fouling slough

"Of envy. Sin is viper sting
That brings a cloak of death to fling
O'er fallen man. The blossoms there,
With warm strange lights, are hopes that
dare

"Illume and lead the conquering soul
When evil would its course control.
Go now to him whose rest is o'er,
And show thy joy, thy life, thy store



THE FIRST HARVEST

"Of beauty that he will adore
And make his own for evermore.
Hold fast the fruit within thy hand,
Thy smile shall Adam's will command."

* * *

By Adam's side, with arm upraised
That held the fruit, while bright eyes blazed
With joy and life, sat Eve. The snake
Uncoiled on rock beyond. Awake

And shaken by conflicting thought
Stood Adam. "I will eat, for naught
Shall compass thee I do not dare,"
He fiercely said, "thou art more fair

"Than flower, or brook, or light, or air ;
With thee I will God's anger share.
Thy smile has not a trace of fear,
'Twill e'en misfortune's pathway cheer.

"Shake back thy hair and let me see
The sweetness of thy face. The Tree
Doth stir my heart. Abide near me,
I fear the wrath o'erhanging thee."



THE FIRST HARVEST

"I fear for thee, dear Adam ; go
And look upon the flowers that grow
Upon that wondrous Tree. They show
Strange powers ; through them thy mind may
know

"How best escape, or meet, the blow
That this new life would overthrow."

"Nay, Eve, thy counsel is amiss,
Although thy smile is sweetest bliss,

"And I could die for thy dear kiss,
Before us yawns a deep abyss.
By *truth* alone our feet can find
Sure way midst pitfalls, that the mind

"May later search, but is too weak
To do aught now but bow, and seek
Forgiveness of the Mighty Word.
That Voice, whose majesty once heard,

"Will ever lead the soul of man,
Though ages pass before the plan
Of Its high purpose shall have grown
Into man's thought and built his own."



THE FIRST HARVEST

"Dear Adam, blame me not. Alas !
I would but have thy judgment pass
Upon the wonders and the way
That Eden's Tree doth bloom, and lay

"Its shadows and its lights on day.
'Tis surely fit that we should stay
Beyond its shade, yet seek the light
That glows in fruit and blossom bright."

" 'Twere well, dear Eve. Come thou ! for I
Have eaten. If we now must die,
I first will stand beneath the Tree
Unraveling mystery with thee.

"Through direst shade and wonders bright
Perchance doth shine God's own clear light."
With anxious thought they reached the Tree
As cool of day fell silently.

And as they stood, hand clasped in hand,
They heard a voice of stern command :
"Where art thou ?" "Adam, 'tis for me,"
Eve whispered. "Nay, for me—not thee !"



THE FIRST HARVEST

Said Adam hoarsely. "Loose thy hold,
Dear Eve ! quick, do as thou art told !"
Ashamed he stood before his Lord,
With draping leaves secured by cord

Of twisted fiber from the palm.
The Voice that spoke was low and calm :
"Thy fault is clear. Fruit of the tree,
Forbidden wisely, now in thee

"Doth take its troubled course. In sweat
And mortal pain must now thy debt
Be paid. The faith thou didst not keep
Through painful harvest must thou reap.

"Beyond the garden thou shalt seek
Thy way, oft blinded, lost and weak.
Yet, ever mounting, thou wilt gain
The strength that springs from toil and pain .

"An Angel at fair Eden's gates—
Stern Guardian—watches, and awaits
Thy passing; and thou *must* obey—
His flaming sword will bar the way."

* * *



THE FIRST HARVEST

Thus soul of man joined march of things,
Whose measured tread through centuries
 swings,

Though oft beset with cares and fears
Uplifting eyes through falling tears,

Yet, touching life's æolian strings,
An anthem with the angels sings—
A mighty song—to which love brings
Of joy its measure, and hope flings

Its tender note on upward wing.
Beneath Heaven's smile and sheltering
The quickened soul, in later race,
Now lives and knows a Saviour's face .

A Saviour and a Son of Man,
The Son of God! who, lifting ban,
Shall lead His flock, by sacrifice,
Through Eden's gates to Paradise .

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